

April 2000

Outreach in Action

CONNECTING KIDS TO HEALTH CARE



SchoolHealthConnections

School Health Connections is an interdepartmental program between the California Department of Health Services and the California Department of Education dedicated to improving the health and academic success of children and youth. This is accomplished through a coordinated school health system that combines health education, health promotion, disease prevention, and access to health-related services in an integrated manner.

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SKIPPER GOES TO WASHINGTON

What does a dog have to do to go to Washington D.C.?

First, he's got to look great. A dog can't be a star without a razzle-dazzle outfit: try a lime green shirt, accented with a red heart, and turquoise pants.

Then he's got to have a catchy slogan: try "My heart's on my sleeve for healthy kids. Kids without health insurance have it RUFF."

Finally, he needs a mission. Skipper, who is the official spokesdog for SKIP (Solano Kids Insurance Program), is very clear about what he's doing. His friendly, larger-than-life character is a motivating message to remind everyone that free and low-cost health care coverage is available for children. Skipper has become a state-wide model for enrolling uninsured children in various health care programs, including Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children.

Skipper made his trip to Washington, D.C., on November 17, 1999, to attend the National Summit on School-Based Outreach for Children's Health Insurance Programs (CHIP). In California, CHIP

"Children who have health coverage are more likely to receive the kind of preventive care that will identify problems that may interfere with their performance in school."

—Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

is called Healthy Families. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the U.S. Departments of Education, Agriculture and Justice, sponsored the summit. The summit brought together state teams, from across the nation, that included state and local agencies, educators and

SKIP Program Director Jacque Wolfram says Skipper played a major role at the national summit. "When Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala walked into the lobby and saw Skipper, she went right over to him and introduced herself. She then went to get Secretary Riley and



others working in school-based outreach efforts to enroll kids in CHIP. Attendees discussed successful ways to work with schools to reach eligible families.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley stated very clearly his agency's interest in CHIP outreach: "Children who have health coverage are more likely to receive the kind of preventive care that will identify problems that may interfere with their performance in school. Children who lack this coverage often fall through the cracks and, in addition to suffering additional health problems, face increased challenges in school."

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala find a new friend in California's Skipper.

asked that Skipper escort both of them to the podium."

Wolfram says that children who have seen Skipper often call her office asking to speak with the dog. "He exudes warmth and a sense of caring." Skipper is available for public appearances. Wolfram says everyone can have the chance to benefit from what Skipper can do. Wolfram (and Skipper!) can be reached at (707) 647-3481.

ROSES To:

THE CALIFORNIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION (CSBA)—for their support in promoting affordable health care coverage for children. Recently they updated their sample school board policy, entitled “Student Health and Social Services,” to include Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children outreach and enrollment efforts as an integral component to ensuring the health and academic success of children. A copy of the policy can be downloaded at www.csba.org or call Martin Gonzalez, CSBA Policy Services Director, at (916) 371-4691, ext. 3046. An accompanying administrative regulation, resolution, action steps and resources are also available.

“WE’VE GOT YOU COVERED”—a ten minute video, with accompanying brochure, that informs parents about how they can enroll their children in Healthy Families, Medi-Cal for Children or other affordable health coverage programs. The video, available in English and Spanish and dubbed in Chinese, Armenian and Korean, creates a doctor’s waiting room with professional actors taking the roles of parents.

The video production is a joint effort of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, National Health Foundation, Los Angeles County Office of Education and Los Angeles Unified School District. For more information, contact Beatriz Garcia-de la Rocha at (213) 763-8312.

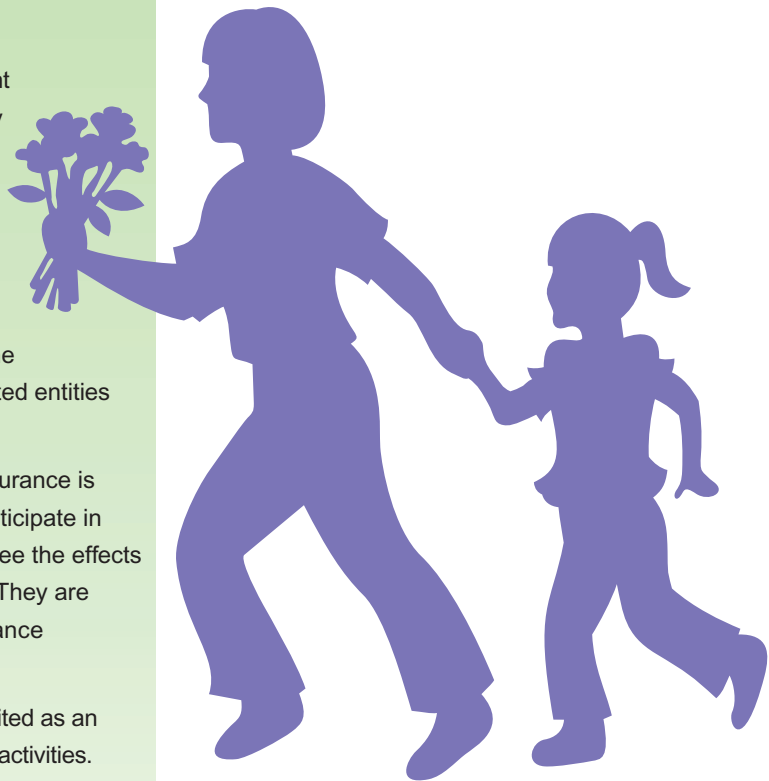
THE 2,000 SCHOOL NURSES, HEALTHY START STAFF, HEALTH CLERKS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA who participated in a Consumers Union survey conducted in the Spring of 1999. The survey identified the level of participation and strategies used by schools and school-affiliated entities in promoting health insurance.

The survey showed that school personnel recognize that health insurance is extremely important to the well-being of children and are eager to participate in outreach, given adequate resources and support. School personnel see the effects firsthand of health, dental and vision problems of uninsured children. They are enthusiastic about the potential solutions that the state health insurance programs provide.

In the survey, support from district and school administrators was cited as an essential motivator to school personnel actively implementing outreach activities. In addition, school personnel cited lack of staff and resources as major barriers to participating in outreach efforts.

The survey showed that most of those surveyed have heard of Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children and think the programs could greatly benefit students.

DAVID LUBIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GOLD RIVER LA PETITE ACADEMY AND CENTER HIGH SCHOOL, all in the Sacramento area, for allowing us to photograph their kids and teens. Their bright, happy faces grace the pages of our newsletter.



The insert in this month’s Outreach in Action Newsletter is designed for you to duplicate. The insert can be posted where staff convene, passed out at staff meetings or put in staff mailboxes.

The description of health care coverage programs can be put on the back of school lunch menus, used in parent newsletters or passed out to parents at events.

PARENT WORKERS FUEL UNIQUE OUTREACH PROGRAM

"If ever there was a win-win program, this has got to be it. First of all, children in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) benefit by getting insurance they critically need. This is of extreme importance to us because Los Angeles has the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation, and many of them are in LAUSD. Secondly, our parent workers gain by having a solid part-time job and training that opens up all kinds of doors for them."

That's the enthusiastic reaction of Beatriz Garcia-de la Rocha, coordinator of Children's Health Access and Medi-Cal Programs (CHAMPS) in LAUSD, to an innovative outreach program in her district. The program hires parents, who are familiar with a particular school and its community to bring other parents together to learn more about California's

Healthy Families/Medi-Cal for Children Outreach Contract. LAUSD has targeted ten clusters, each made up of a high school with feeder middle and elementary schools, to pilot the project.

Parents are recruited who have some experience in the health field or who are at least familiar with what's happening in health care. "These health care community representatives should be outgoing people who are good networkers. Being bilingual is a plus," says Garcia-de la Rocha.

Once representatives are on-board, they are trained, mentored and given on-going support throughout their employment. Garcia-de la Rocha says the district realizes that the information about health care programs is difficult to learn. "A health care advocate teams up with a parent until the representative is comfortable doing presentations alone." Once the parent health care community representative is ready, the representative sets meetings, usually at school sites, where

other parents can come and get information. Networking through existing school organizations like parent centers and at activities such as PTA meetings is common.

One reason the program is successful is that parent representatives are trusted by other parents and establish strong connections. "To see a representative trained, and then to watch that person as he or she grows to become more familiar with the program is very rewarding," says Garcia-de la Rocha. "We hired one parent in our program who was going back to college part-time. She had been on Medi-Cal herself and could identify with other parents who had the same needs. She had incredible empathy with others and was able to offer suggestions."

Garcia-de la Rocha says a community representative gains a great deal from the job, including exposure to the business world. Many representatives are able to move to other part-time district jobs, resulting in full-time employment. "They learn to run a meeting, work with community-based organizations and keep a calendar and mileage. The kind of skills many of us take for granted."

"One of the subtle but very substantial benefits of the job is the feeling of self-esteem that can come to a representative," says Garcia-de la Rocha. "They have a sense of truly contributing."

DID YOU KNOW?

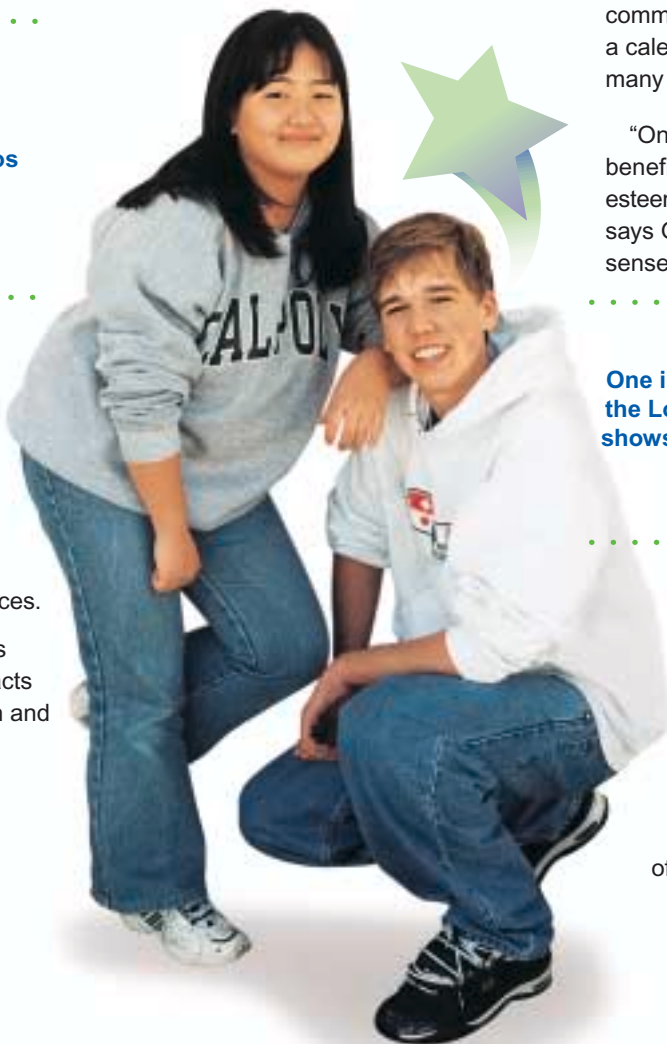
Dental care and mental health services are among the largest unmet health care needs of the Los Angeles Unified School District children assessed at several Healthy Start sites.

Healthy Families, Medi-Cal for Children and other free and low-cost health coverage programs.

Approximately one in five children in California are uninsured. Many of these children are missing valuable school time because they do not have access to regular, preventive health care services.

The LAUSD CHAMPS project was originally funded in 1999 with contracts from the National Health Foundation and the California Department of Health Services Medi-Cal program.

It is now funded as part of a new



DID YOU KNOW?

One in every fifty students screened by the Los Angeles Unified School District shows some form of hearing difficulty for which medical follow-up is recommended.

But Garcia-de la Rocha is also aware of how much representatives give back. "They constantly remind us of what parents experience. They lend reality to what we do. They are a good voice for maintaining a sensitivity to parents. They'll help us move forward in reducing the rate of uninsured children in Los Angeles."

COMBINING RESOURCES HAS BIG PAY-OFF

It's said there's power in numbers. The many people involved in school-based outreach to improve health access in the Pasadena Unified School District would agree wholeheartedly.

Thirty-five community-based organizations have come together to form Children's Health Access Task Force. The coalition's goal is to share information

about ways to enroll children in health care coverage such as Healthy Families, Medi-Cal for Children and other affordable health coverage programs.

"Every month we get together and see what's working, what barriers we've encountered and how we can tackle them," says Cathy Hight, R.N., M.S.N., Pasadena Public Health Department program coordinator. "School-based outreach efforts must be addressed by local, regional and state collaborative efforts in order to make it happen."

"SCHOOL JAM" IN 30 SCHOOLS

Primary to the program is what is known as the "School Jam." This involves the task force reaching out to just one school per week in an intensive enroll-

ment effort. There are 30 schools in the district. The order of schools reached has been prioritized by the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

"During the Jam blitz," says Hight, "we concentrate all of our resources and energy on that one school. Parent letters go out and a ruler is given to each student with our logo and outreach numbers on it. Parents are reached through different activities such as after-school programs, English as a Second Language parent classes and PTA meetings."

Hight stresses that because every school is different, the activities and approaches used are highly specialized. An effort is made to be in as many places as possible in the school where parents can be found.

FOLLOW-UP IS THE NAME OF THE GAME

There is a strong emphasis on follow-up. "After the Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children application is filled out," says Hight, "that's not the end. We check to see if more help is needed." A California Department of Health Services Medi-Cal program contract and a Healthy Families/Medi-Cal for Children Outreach Contract to the Pasadena Public Health Department provides funding for the outreach campaign.

The Pasadena Public Health Department has Medi-Cal outstationed workers available. As parents learn about their children's eligibility, the health partners provide unmet health care needs, such as

immunizations and Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP) physicals.

The program also has a strong parent education component. Parents are encouraged to keep health diaries on their children. The value of routine preventive care and immunizations is taught.

One of the community-based partners in the task force provides a program unique to Pasadena. Called "Young and Healthy," Hight says the partner group offers free health care through a coalition composed of volunteer doctors, dentists, psychologists and other health practitioners. "Once they have extended care to the child, they are in a prime position to make sure the parents are given information about no-cost and low-cost health coverage programs. 'Young and Healthy' continues to prove itself to be an exceptional partner in our outreach."

Patricia Lachelt, director of health programs for the Pasadena Unified School District, is an avid supporter of the task force.

"There are tremendous advantages in a coalition. Everyone is working together for the same cause: that every child has health coverage."



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HEALTHY FAMILIES & MEDI-CAL FOR CHILDREN

INSURING THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN

Over 1.2 million uninsured children qualify for either the Healthy Families program or Medi-Cal for Children. A streamlined joint mail-in application that is available in 11 languages makes it easy for families to apply. Below is an overview of these two programs.

BENEFITS:

- Regular checkups (including well-child visits)
- Immunizations
- Prescription medicine
- Lab and x-ray fees
- Dental and eye care (including eyeglasses)
- Mental health and substance abuse services
- Physician and hospital services

ELIGIBILITY:

- Determined by family income and size, and by age of the child*
- Covers children from birth up to age 19
- Available to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals and qualified immigrant children regardless of date of entry (a child may qualify for some form of Medi-Cal, regardless of immigration status)

**Children whose family income is up to 250% of the federal income guidelines may qualify for one of these programs. For a family of four, that translates to \$42,625/year (as of April 2000).*



- No-cost coverage.
- No monthly premiums.
- No co-payments for any benefit.
- Provides health, dental and vision care coverage.



- Low-cost coverage for children that do not qualify for Medi-Cal.
- Low monthly premiums from \$4 per child to a maximum of \$27 per family.
- No co-payment for preventive services such as immunizations.
- \$5 co-payment for non-preventive services such as going to the doctor due to illness.
- Choice of major health, dental and vision insurance plans that include Blue Shield, Health Net, local initiatives (community provider plans) and others.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WHO DO NOT QUALIFY FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OR MEDI-CAL FOR CHILDREN:

KAISER PERMANENTE CARES FOR KIDS* provides low-cost health care coverage for uninsured children who are not eligible for no-cost Medi-Cal for Children or Healthy Families. This program covers children under age 19 within Kaiser Permanente's California service area. For more information, call toll-free 1-800-255-5053.

CALIFORNIA KIDS* provides affordable preventive and primary health, dental, vision and behavioral health coverage for undocumented children. For more information, call toll-free 1-800-374-4KID.

*Not affiliated with or endorsed by the State of California. Eligibility is based on family size and income.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

1-888-747-1222

California
Department of
Health Services



SchoolHealthConnections

OUTREACH TIPS TO GET YOUR DISTRICT INVOLVED!

1. Inform parents about Healthy Families, Medi-Cal for Children and other affordable health coverage programs:

★ Display health care coverage information and referral numbers:

- ♥ on bulletin boards.
- ♥ in the main school office.
- ♥ in nurse, attendance, or sports offices.
- ♥ in locations around the school where parents may be present.

★ Distribute information to parents:

- ♥ at back-to-school nights, PTA meetings, open houses and school health fairs.
- ♥ at sign-ups for sports and other extracurricular activities.
- ♥ in school newsletters and with report cards and lunch menus.

2. Inform district and school staff on available coverage. Include:

- ♥ nurses
- ♥ counselors
- ♥ teachers and school aides
- ♥ coaches

Ask staff to refer families to the Healthy Families/Medi-Cal for Children toll-free line (1-888-747-1222) for information and assistance.

3. Make outreach a part of routine school activities:

- ★ Encourage the school food services director to include enrollment information in the Free and Reduced Price Meals Applications sent home to parents.
- ★ Give parents applications or enrollment information during school registration.

4. Assist with enrollment activities:

- ★ Refer families to a local community-based organization that has trained application assistants. These application assistants can help families free-of-charge in completing Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children applications.
- ★ Provide space/facilities within your school district for local agencies and community-based organizations:
 - ♥ to hold special community enrollment events.
 - ♥ to operate a "Health Coverage Information" booth during school health fairs, physicals, immunization drives and vision and hearing testing days.
- ★ Encourage staff to be trained as application assistants.

OTHER IDEAS?

We'd like to hear about your creative school outreach approaches.

Contact Outreach in Action Editor

Cheewa James

at (916) 657-1383 or

fax (916) 653-2781.

We'd like to share your ideas with other districts and schools.



SchoolHealthConnections

NEED HELP? HERE'S WHERE TO GO!

- ★ Refer parents to the Healthy Families and Medi-Cal for Children toll-free number (operators speak 10 languages) **1-888-747-1222** to:

- ♥ ask questions about the health coverage programs.
- ♥ request a joint application.
- ♥ be referred to a certified application assistant (CAA).

School districts who want more information on the programs can also call.

- ★ Visit the Healthy Families Web Site at: **www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov**

- ♥ for more information on Healthy Families.
- ♥ for names of organizations that have certified application assistants.

- ★ Call RHA (Richard Heath and Associates) at **1-888-237-6248**:

- ♥ for applications and handbooks.
- ♥ to get names of agencies or community-based organizations that have certified application assistants.
- ♥ to get trained as a certified application assistant.

- ★ Call School Health Connections, Department of Health Services, at **1-916-653-7746**:

- ♥ to get parent information fliers (available in 11 languages).
- ♥ to get a copy of a health care coverage summary chart that includes income eligibility guidelines (available in English and Spanish).